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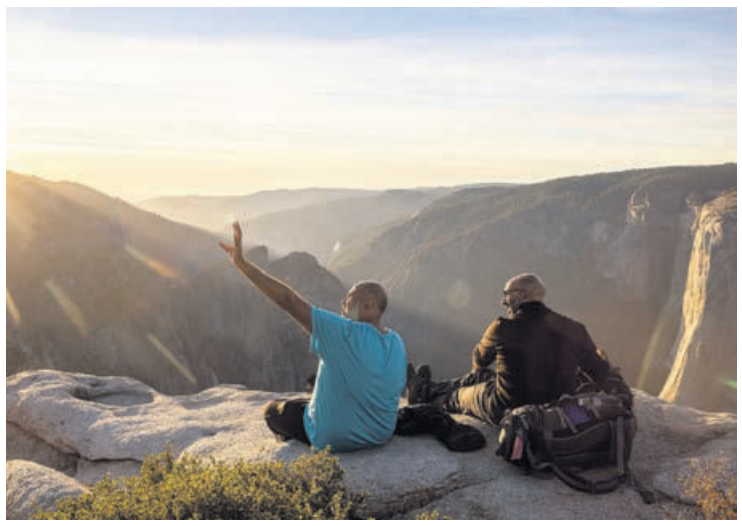


Visitors watch a sunset on rock ledge near Taft Point in Yosemite National Park, Calif., Oct. 30, 2025.

Associated Press.

National Parks to raise fees for millions of international tourists to popular US parks

By HALLIE GOLDEN and MATTHEW DALY
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The National Park Service said Tuesday it is going to start charging the millions of international tourists who visit U.S. parks each year an extra $100 to enter some of the most popular sites, while leaving them out of fee-free days that will be reserved for American residents.

The announcement declaring "America-first entry fee policies" comes as national parks deal with the strain of a major staff reduction and severe budget cuts, along with recovering from damage during the recent government shutdown and significant lost revenue due to fees not being collected during that time.

The fee change will impact 11 national parks, including the Grand Canyon, Yellowstone and Yosemite, according to the U.S. Department of the Interior.

As part of the changes, which are set to take effect Jan. 1, foreign tourists will also see their annual parks pass price jump to $250, while U.S. residents will continue to be charged $80, according to the department's statement.

Interior Secretary Doug Burgum said in a post on the social platform X that the changes make sure U.S. taxpayers who support the park service "continue to enjoy affordable access, while international visitors contribute their fair share to maintaining and improving our parks for future generations!"

A White House post on X laying out the increased fees ended with the phrase, "AMERICANS FIRST."

The announcement follows a July executive order in which President Donald Trump directed the parks to increase entry fees for foreign tourists.

"There's a lot to unpack in this announcement, including many questions on its implementation all which NPCA will raise with the Department of Interior," Kati Schmidt, a spokesperson for National Parks Conservation Association, said in an email.

The U.S. Travel Association estimated that in 2018, national parks and monuments saw more than 14 million international visitors. Yellowstone reported that in 2024, nearly 15% of its visitors were from outside the country, which was down from 30% in 2018.

The money made off the new fees will help support the national parks, including with upgrading facilities for visitors and maintenance, according to the statement.❑

New prosecutor won't pursue charges against Trump and others in Georgia election interference case

ATLANTA (AP) — The prosecutor who recently took over the Georgia election interference case against President Donald Trump and others said in a court filing Wednesday that he has decided not to pursue the case further.

Pete Skandalakis, the executive director of the Prosecuting Attorneys' Council of Georgia, took over the case last month from Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis, who was removed over an "appearance of impropriety" created by a romantic relationship with the special prosecutor she chose to lead the case.

After Skandalakis' filing, Fulton County Superior Court Judge Scott McAfee issued a one-paragraph order dismissing the case in its entirety.

It was unlikely that legal action against Trump could have moved forward while he is president.

But 14 other defendants still faced charges, including former New York mayor and Trump attorney Rudy Giuliani and former White House chief of staff Mark Meadows.

Prosecuting Attorneys' Council of Georgia Executive Director Peter J. Skandalakis answers questions during a news conference, Aug. 23, 2022, in Atlanta.

Associated Press.

Steve Sadow, Trump's lead attorney in Georgia, applauded the case's dismissal: "The political persecution of President Trump by disqualified DA Fani Willis is finally over. This case should never have been brought. A fair and impartial prosecutor has put an end to this lawfare."

After the Georgia Supreme Court in September declined to hear Willis' appeal of her disqualification, it fell to the Prosecuting Attorneys' Council to find a new prosecutor. Skandalakis said last month that he reached out to several prosecutors, but they all declined to take on the case. McAfee set a Nov. 14 deadline for the appointment of a new prosecutor, so Skandalakis chose to appoint himself rather than allow the case to be dismissed right away.

He said Willis' office had only recently delivered the case file 101 boxes and an eight-terabyte hard drive and he hadn't had a chance to review everything yet. Citing the public's "legitimate interest in the outcome of this case," he said he wanted to assess the evidence and decide on the appropriate next steps.

Skandalakis, who has led the small, nonpartisan council since 2018, said in a court filing last month that he will get no extra pay for the case but that Fulton County will reimburse expenses. He previously spent about 25 years as the elected Republican district attorney for the Coweta Judicial Circuit, southwest of Atlanta.

Willis announced the sprawling indictment against Trump and 18 others in August 2023, using the state's anti-racketeering law to allege a wide-ranging conspiracy to illegally overturn Trump's narrow loss to Democrat Joe Biden in Georgia. Defense attorneys sought Willis' removal after one revealed in January 2024 that Willis had a romantic relationship with Nathan Wade, the special prosecutor she hired to lead the case. ❑

Americans eye Thanksgiving travel weather after Texas tornadoes, snow and rain elsewhere

By JUAN A. LOZANO
Associated Press

CYPRESS, Texas (AP) — Kenny Beck surveyed the damage Tuesday to his family's two-story home after at least two tornadoes tore through the Houston area, damaging over 100 homes at the start of a busy Thanksgiving travel week that has Americans closely eyeing the weather.

"Half my roof on the back is gone," Beck, 46, said as workers cleared large tree branches and other debris from around nearby houses in the suburb of Cypress. "We've lost a lot of ceiling because of the rain. Our garage door got sucked in."

No injuries were reported from Monday's storm but it uprooted trees, downed power lines and scattered debris throughout some neighborhoods northwest of Houston. The National Weather Service on Tuesday had confirmed at least two tornadoes, one in Cypress with winds up to 105 mph (168 kph) and another around the community of Klein with winds up to 115 mph (185 kph).

Beck said that while repairs are being made, his family will have to move out of the home where they've lived and shared many moments and memories with family and friends over the past 20 years.

"I'm just hoping that here in a couple of months, we can get back in and we can start making more of those memories," Beck said. Meanwhile, multiple rounds of storms and showers were expected in Mississippi, Alabama and Georgia. The storm system was expected to move to the Northeast by Tuesday night, with another one in the forecast in the Pacific Northwest.

Even though the official start of winter is nearly a month away, a wintry storm was developing in the northern part of the country, with snow falling in North Dakota.

"That's impacting North Dakota, Minnesota, including Minneapolis, and then portions of the northern Great Lakes," said weather service meteorologist Marc Chenard in College Park, Maryland. He said snowfall was expected into Wednesday.

As much as 8 inches (20 centimeters) of snow had fallen by late Tuesday afternoon in parts of North Dakota and South Dakota, according to the National Weather Service. In North Dakota, officials closed parts of Interstate 94 and Interstate 29 due to ice, low visibility and multiple accidents.

The holiday itself was shaping up to be dry, cold and breezy for the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade on Thursday in New York. But parts of western New York and northern Michigan are expected to see lake-effect snow Wednesday through Friday.❑

Jose Rosas surveys damage to Guillermo Vargas' home as while helping clean up storm damage in the Memorial Northwest subdivision, in Spring, Texas, Monday, Nov. 24, 2025.

Associated Press.

Nigerian parents say they are kept in the dark over abducted schoolchildren

By YUNUSA UMAR and OPE ADETAYO
Associated Press

PAPIRI, Nigeria (AP) — Several parents of the over 300 schoolchildren seized by armed men in the latest mass abduction in Nigeria tell The Associated Press the government has told them nothing about rescue efforts and the stress has been so high that one parent has died of a heart attack.

"Nobody from the government has briefed us about the abduction," said Emmanuel Ejeh, whose 12-year-old son was taken from the Catholic school in Niger state.

No armed group has claimed responsibility for Friday's abduction of 303 children from the remote community of Papiri, the latest in a series of high-profile seizures in search of ransom. Fifty of the students have since escaped.

The rise in mass abductions from schools comes as the Trump administration pressures Nigeria to act against what it calls the persecution of Christians there a claim Nigeria's government denies. Such abductions had decreased in the past two years.

Experts say Muslims suffer just as much or more from the attacks by bandits and militants linked to al-Qaida or the Islamic State group.

Nigeria's government has few answers

Parents have gathered at the dusty school compound in Papiri, attempting to comfort each other. Ejeh said his wife fainted after hearing their son was taken.

"It is painful," Ejeh said. "Mathew is a very kind boy who dreams of becoming a football player. He is after football day and night."

Police and government officials walk past St. Mary's Catholic Primary and Secondary School where gunmen on Friday abducted children and staff in Papiri community, Nigeria, Tuesday, Nov.25, 2025.

Associated Press.

Two parents of abducted children have died, one of a heart attack, said the bishop of Kontagora diocese, Rev. Bulus Dauwa Yohanna, who also runs the school.

A spokesperson for Nigeria's presidency, Bayo Onanuga, did not directly address parents' allegations of being left in the dark. Onanuga told the AP on Wednesday that the military is mounting pressure on the gunmen to release the children.

Nigerian authorities have said helicopters and ground troops have been deployed. Military personnel mingled with anxious parents this week.

The attack came days after gunmen seized 25 students in nearby Kebbi state. All have been rescued, Nigerian authorities said on Tuesday. On Wednesday, police said the students had been reunited with their families.

An AP tally shows that at least 1,799 students have been abducted in a dozen of the largest attacks in Nigeria starting with the seizure of 276 schoolgirls in the village of Chibok by Boko Haram militants, an attack that sparked global outrage.

Some students escape. Others are rescued. Some are never seen again.

Some abducted students have health issues

When Yohanna Yakubu, a church pastor, heard his daughter Mercy was among the 12 teachers also taken in the Papiri attack, he ran to the school. Other agonized parents were already there.

"I went straight to her room (at the dormitory) and saw that the window was broken," Yakubu said. He called the lack of information from authorities frustrating.

These days he sits in silence, worry creasing his face.

Danteni Mathew's three children were abducted, but one escaped. He worries about the health of his youngest, who remains missing.

"Yahaya was not healthy before his abduction from the school as he is still battling with hepatitis C," Mathew said.

School safety training had been promised

Under international scrutiny after the Chibok mass abduction, Nigeria's government initiated a Safe School Initiative with plans to involve military assets and train staff to improve safety at schools. Soldiers in some cases are stationed at schools considered vulnerable.

It was not immediately clear whether the Papiri school had received that training.

Activists and others assert that little has been done.

UNICEF last year said just 37% of schools across 10 states in Nigeria's volatile north have early-warning systems to detect threats.

"The fact is that Nigerian lives do not matter to the Nigerian government, and what matters to the Nigerian government is how good they look, so they are more focused on propaganda," said Aisha Yesufu, who helped found the Bring Back Our Girls movement after the Chibok abduction.

Analysts say armed gangs are spreading

Analysts say armed gangs often target schools for abductions because of the pressure they put on the government to negotiate ransoms.

The West African nation is battling dozens of armed groups operating in remote communities with limited government and security presence.

The crisis has become more complex as groups from other parts of the vast Sahel region have joined Boko Haram factions in trying to establish their presence in northern Nigeria, said James Barnett, a research fellow with the U.S.-based Hudson Institute.

"Both bandits and jihadists can have similar interests in conducting these sorts of mass abductions," he said.❑

Brazil's former President Jair Bolsonaro begins 27-year prison sentence for coup attempt

By MAURICIO SAVARESE
Associated Press

BRASILIA, Brazil (AP) — Former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro on Tuesday started his 27-year prison sentence for leading a coup attempt, to the surprise of many in the South American nation who doubted he would ever end up behind bars.

Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes, who has overseen the case, ruled Bolsonaro will remain in custody after being preemptively arrested on Saturday.

Supporters and detractors of the embattled leader gathered outside the federal police headquarters after the order was issued, some calling for Bolsonaro's release and others toasting to his imprisonment.

The far-right leader had been under house arrest since August and was taken in on Saturday after trying to break his ankle monitor. Bolsonaro blamed "hallucinations", a claim that de Moraes dismissed in his preemptive arrest order.

Bolsonaro will not have any contact with the few other inmates at the federal police headquarters. His 12-square-meter room has a bed, a private bathroom, air conditioning, a TV set and a desk, according to federal police. He will have free access to his doctors and lawyers, but others will have to get their access approved by the Supreme Court.

Exhausted appeals

De Moraes determined on Tuesday that Bolsonaro's defense had exhausted all appeals of his conviction. His lawyers disagree and promise to keep filing requests for house arrest due to the former leader's poor health. The Supreme Court justice has already ruled against it, but that decision could be revised if circumstances change.

"There is no legal possibility of any other appeal," de Moraes said in his decision.

Brazil's criminal law also could have allowed the 70-year-old to be transferred to a local penitentiary or to a prison room in a military facility in the capital Brasilia.

Brazil's former President Jair Bolsonaro stands at the entrance of his home where he is under house arrest in Brasilia, Brazil, Tuesday, Sept. 2, 2025.

Associated Press.

The former president and several of his allies were convicted by a panel of Supreme Court justices for attempting to overthrow Brazil's democracy following his 2022 election defeat.

The plot included plans to kill President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, Vice President Geraldo Alckmin and Justice de Moraes. The plan also involved encouraging an insurrection in early 2023.

The former president was also found guilty of charges including leading an armed criminal organization and attempting the violent abolition of the democratic rule of law.

Bolsonaro has always denied wrongdoing.

Champagne and tears

Outside the federal police building, about a dozen Bolsonaro supporters dressed in yellow and green of the Brazilian flag cried foul and asked Congress to pass a bill to give the former president and his allies some kind of amnesty. Some chose to insult de Moraes, the media and Lula supporters. A few still pleaded for help from U.S. President Donald Trump against Brazil's left.

"I am outraged. This is the best president of my life, my friend. This is a great injustice," said Elaine Leandro, 61, a hard core Bolsonaro supporter who says she will come to the federal police headquarters every day until he is released. "I hate you, Alexandre de Moraes. You deserve hell."

Sao Paulo city councilor Keit Lima, 34, had very different feelings. She brought champagne and shared it with other Black women who had come from a march in Brasilia to celebrate Bolsonaro's imprisonment.

"Today we can breath and continue fighting for our democracy," Lima said. "Our democracy is young, but we want it to live long."

In other Brazilian cities, supporters prayed for the former president while detractors celebrated.

Other convictions

Two others convicted, Augusto Heleno and Paulo Sérgio Nogueira, both Army generals, were sent to a military facility in Brasilia to start serving their sentences. Former Justice Minister Anderson Torres is now imprisoned at the Papuda penitentiary, also in Brazil's capital.

Adm. Almir Garnier will serve his term at Navy facilities in Brasilia.

Bolsonaro's running mate and former Defense Minister Walter Braga Netto, another army general, will remain in prison at a military facility in Rio de Janeiro.

De Moraes also confirmed that lawmaker and former head of Brazil's intelligence agency Alexandre Ramagem is on the loose in the United States.

The judge also ordered lower house Speaker Hugo Motta to strip Ramagem of his seat.

Motta has the power to put a possible amnesty for Bolsonaro to a vote, though party leaders have said in recent months that it is very unlikely because it would be struck down later by the Supreme Court if approved.

Bolsonaro remains a key figure in Brazilian politics, despite being ineligible to run for office until at least until 2030 after a separate ruling by Brazil's top electoral court. The first day of his prison sentence should mark an extension of that deadline to 2033.

Polls show he would be a competitive candidate in next year's vote if allowed to run.

US tensions

The former president is an ally of Trump, who has called the trial of the former Brazilian leader a "witch hunt." Bolsonaro was mentioned in a July order by the U.S. administration to raise tariffs on several Brazilian exports by 50%.

Relations between the two countries have improved since, with Lula and Trump meeting in Malaysia at the ASEAN summit in October. Most of those higher tariffs have been dropped.

The U.S. also imposed sanctions on de Moraes and other Brazilian officials.

The measures in support of Bolsonaro did not have their desired effect and the trial proceeded nevertheless. Lula's popularity was boosted by the perception that he was defending Brazilian sovereignty.

Bolsonaro is not the first former president to spend time behind bars. His predecessor Michel Temer (2016-2018) and his successor Lula have also been to prison. Fernando Collor de Mello, who governed between 1990 and 1992, is currently under house arrest due to a corruption conviction.

Bolsonaro is the first to be convicted of attempting a coup.❑

Russian nationals among 4 people arrested in France over espionage probe

By JOHN LEICESTER
Associated Press

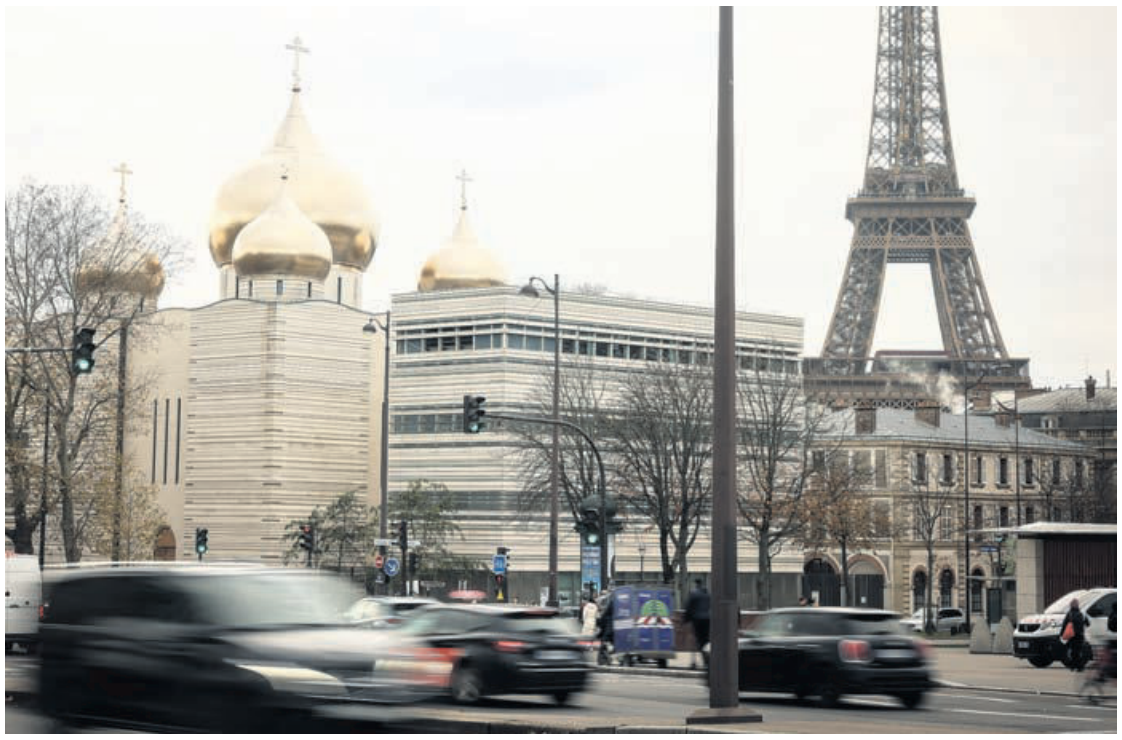
PARIS (AP) — French authorities have detained members of a pro-Russia support group and accused them of intelligence-gathering for a foreign power.

The SOS Donbass group was set up in France in 2022. Its founder, a dual French-Russian national, was among four people taken into custody.

The General Directorate of Internal Security, or DGSI, France's domestic secret service that specializes in counter-espionage, had for months been investigating her activities, the Paris prosecutor's office said.

Three men were also taken into custody, one of them a Russian national.

The break-up of the alleged intelligence operation comes amid fresh warnings from French President Emmanuel Macron about Russian destabilization efforts targeting France, a key backer of Ukraine.



The Holy-Trinity Russian orthodox Cathedral and the adjoining culture center, right, are seen next to the Eiffel Tower in Paris, Wednesday, Nov. 26, 2025.

Associated Press.

The Paris prosecutor's office identified the detained founder of SOS Donbass only as Anna N. It said the 40-year-old was born in Russia. Also arrested was a 40-year-old Russian identified as Vyacheslav P., as well as two French nationals referred to as Vincent P., 63, and Bernard F., 58.

Anna N. has been in the DGSI's crosshairs for months and is "suspected of having approached executives from various French companies in order to obtain information related to French economic interests," the prosecutor's office said in a statement to The Associated Press.

It said she was also in contact with Vyacheslav P., who is alleged to have fixed pro-Russia posters onto the Arc de Triomphe in September. The posters showed a Russian soldier and the words "say thank you to the victorious soviet soldier."

The prosecutor's office said Vyacheslav P., who remains in detention, was identified in video footage as the poster-sticker on the Paris landmark.

The prosecutor's office said Anna N. and Vincent P. face preliminary charges of criminal conspiracy, intelligence contacts with a foreign power and gathering information for a foreign power crimes each punishable by up to 10 years in prison as well as large fines. They remain in detention.

Preliminary charges of criminal conspiracy and intelligence contacts with a foreign power have been filed against Bernard F., who is not in detention but is barred from leaving France and must report weekly to authorities.

Vyacheslav P. faces preliminary charges of criminal conspiracy and property damage to serve a foreign power.❑

13 people killed in fire engulfing Hong Kong high-rise residential buildings, fire services say

By CHAN HO-HIM and KEN MORITSUGU
Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — A fire spread across seven high-rise apartment buildings in a Hong Kong housing complex, killing 13 people and leaving others still trapped, in the city's worst blaze in years.

Nine people were declared dead at the scene and four others who were sent to the hospital were later confirmed dead, authorities told reporters. At least 15 others were injured, and about 700 people have been evacuated to temporary shelters.

Firefighters try to extinguish a flames engulfing a building after a fire broke out at Wang Fuk Court, a residential estate in the Tai Po district of Hong Kong's New Territories, Wednesday, Nov. 26 2025.

Associated Press.

The raging fire sent up a column of flames and thick smoke as it spread quickly on bamboo scaffolding and construction netting that had been set up around the exterior of the housing complex in Tai Po district, in the New Territories. Records show the housing complex consisted of eight buildings with almost 2,000 apartments housing about 4,800 people.

Multiple buildings close to each other were ablaze, with bright flames and smoke shooting out of many of the apartments' windows as night fell. Authorities said that hundreds of firefighters, police officers and paramedics were deployed. Firefighters aimed water at the intense flames from high up on ladder trucks.

The blaze started mid-afternoon, and authorities upgraded it to a level 5 alarm, the highest level of severity, after nightfall, the Fire Services Department said. The blaze was still raging late into the night, and authorities said that conditions remained very challenging for firefighters.

"Debris and scaffolding of the affected buildings are falling down," said Derek Armstrong Chan, deputy director of Fire Services (Operations). "The temperature inside the buildings concerned (is) very high. It's difficult for us to enter the building and go upstairs to conduct firefighting and rescue operations."

It wasn't immediately known what caused the fire. Officials said that it started at the external scaffolding of one of the buildings and later spread to inside the building and also to nearby buildings, likely aided by windy conditions. The department said that it received "numerous" calls requesting assistance and some residents remained trapped as of Wednesday night.

Firefighters deployed 128 fire trucks and 57 ambulances to the scene.

The dead included one firefighter and another was being treated for heat exhaustion, Fire Services Department Director Andy Yeung said.

Chinese leader Xi Jinping on Wednesday expressed condolences to the firefighter who died and extended sympathies to the families of the victims, according to state broadcaster CCTV.❑

Aruba's underwater wonderland

(Oranjestad)—Exploring the underwater wonders is something you should definitely do during your stay in Aruba. The underwater world has everything to offer that makes a snorkel trip so exceptional; an impressive, colorful sea life with exotic fishes, turtles and beautiful coral reef. The historic shipwrecks, located on the Aruban seabed are also worth a visit. Aruba is known for its white beaches and blue oceans, which means there are many fascinating under water spots you can explore. So take your snorkeling gear and visit some of these top places for underwater exploration.

Tres Trapi

'Tres Trapi' means three steps in Papiamento. The beach is called Tres Trapi because it is accessible by a tiny stairway carved into the rocky coastline. Tres Trapi is a small beach, located on the north-western side of the island, an approximately 5 to 10 minute drive from Palm Beach. From the unique steps you walk right into the clear and turquoise blue ocean. While you're snorkeling, you will encounter all kind of tropical fishes and sea stars. The kind of starfish you will find in the Aruban waters is the red cushion sea star. This is a starfish that is commonly found in the shallow waters of the Caribbean Sea and if you are lucky during your snorkeling visit to Tres Trapi, you may come across one of the green sea turtles. Respect the animals, keep your distance and just enjoy the view. Also remember; it is a once in a life time experience.

Antilla shipwreck

Antilla is a 400-foot-long long ship, built in 1939 in Hamburg, Germany. Antilla came to Aruba, because it had to find a neutral port. When Germany invaded the Netherlands on May 10, 1940, the crew decided to let their own ship sink, to prevent it from falling into the hands of the Dutch Navy. Antilla lies on its portside in Malmok bay, and the sunken WWII ship is now one of Aruba's most popular snorkeling and dive spots. However, the ship wreck can only be reached by boat. The ship is visible from the surface and during your snorkeling trip you be surrounded by hundreds of tropical fishes, but the ship wreck alone is already impressive enough.

Baby Beach

Baby beach is a lagoon with crystal blue ocean. The beach is located on the southern part of the island. On the way to the famous beach, you will drive through the old capital of Aruba, San Nicolas. The old Aruban culture can be still felt and experienced here, so do not hesitate to get out of your car and walk around for a while. Baby beach is a child friendly beach, since it is shallow and the water has a pleasant temperature. The name therefore fits well with the beach. Further in the lagoon, you'll find a lot of people snorkeling. This is an excellent spot to go under water exploring—but do take care not to go too far

out; outside the lagoon the waves can be pretty rough! In the lagoon there is an area marked until where it is recommended to snorkel and on the beach you will find different facilities. It is a perfect beach to spend your day snorkeling and relaxing.

Mangel Halto

Mangel Halto beach is located in Savaneta, on the southern-west part of the island. The beach is different from the other beaches in Aruba; it is beach full of mangroves. The main entrance to reach the beach is through a small bridge that takes you through the mangrove trees. There are diverse spots where you can enjoy a perfect beach day, accompanied with wooden stairs built to allow easy access to the water and a dock to sit on and enjoy the view. Mangel Halto is also worth a visit for the snorkeling experience. Inside the bay, the water is clear and you'll find many colorful fish. Outside the bay is a bit more challenging for beginners because of the wind and the waves, but the coral is alive and it is snorkel heaven.❑

Experience a taste of Belgium in Aruba – Only at L'Avenue, Palm Beach

Nestled in the heart of Palm Beach, Aruba, L'Avenue brings a fresh breeze of Belgian charm to the Caribbean. Just over a year since its grand opening, this intimate bistro has quickly made its mark with its warm hospitality, authentic cuisine, and elegant yet approachable ambiance.

Whether you're strolling through Palm Beach after a morning at the beach or looking for a special dinner spot, L'Avenue welcomes you with an inviting terrace, stylish décor, and the comforting aroma of Belgian classics crafted to perfection. It's a place where locals, travelers, food lovers, and beer connoisseurs come together — united by a love for great food, heartfelt service, and that unmistakable European flair.

At L'Avenue, every dish tells a story — one of tradition, seasonality, and bold yet balanced flavors. From crispy croquettes and perfectly poured Belgian beers

to steaming pots of fresh mussels flown in weekly, the menu offers something both comforting and surprising.
Lunch includes a variety of sandwiches—with a healthy selection of bread options—if you're going for a light meal, but just like their dinner selection, also includes steak, chicken, fish, and even rabbit if you're craving a bit more of L'Avenue's exquisite menu. And let's not forget their wide selection of Belgian beer and European wine to complete the tasty experience! But that's not all! L'Avenue is offering their guests their Early Bird Special, available every day from 4pm to 7pm. Enjoy this affordable and delectable 3-course meal special at a comfortable price of $29.50 per guest, which includes a selection of their fine in-house wine.

More Than a Bistro
A Culinary Destination

L'Avenue is more than just a place to eat — it's a culinary destination. A thoughtfully curated menu, an extensive selection of premium Belgian beers, and an atmosphere that balances European elegance with island ease make it one of the most talked-about dining spots in Aruba.

Whether you're looking for a casual lunch, a romantic dinner, or a celebratory evening with friends, L'Avenue delivers a dining experience that's as memorable as it is delicious.

Open daily for lunch and dinner
Located in the heart of Palm Beach, Aruba
Come discover Belgium's best — right here at L'Avenue.❑

Sun catcher: The Cododo

ORANJESTAD – Colorful or camouflaged, you're bound to encounter a variety of lizards basking in the sun or scurrying on their way in our island. From the charming, friendly iguanas to the good-luck gecko Pega-Pega, you're bound to meet a few of these special residents during your visit. Meet our famous Cododo; native to the island, and a garden protector!

The Blue Cododo
These are one of the most striking lizards in Aruba, recognizable by the male's bright blue color. The Aruban whiptail lizard, Cnemidophorus arubensis, is a species endemic to Aruba, meaning you can only find it here on our One Happy Island! They are also recognized as the most common and populous lizard on the island. While the male is blue with white dots, the female is brown with blue dots.
These charming lizards eat mostly plants, such as flowers, nectar, leaves and fruits, and occasionally enjoy some insects. They are selective in which plants they eat, because of the toxins present in many available plants species. The Cododo help take care of Aruba's vegetation by playing a significant role in the dispersal of seeds for certain plants: when they eat fruit, they excrete the seeds in diverse locations, contributing to the reproduction cycle of our local plants.❑

Images: Image is from Aruba Birdlife Conservation.

Visit the natural bridges of Aruba!

(Oranjestad)—After you've visited the Alto Vista Church, the Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruins and the mini natural pool that is located right next to it, you're next up around the northern coast line must be the Natural Bridge. Once the largest natural bridge in the Caribbean, this bridge has been a tourist attraction for many years.

The bridge was formed during thousands of years, cut and crafted by the wild waves that crash into the coral stone walls of the coast. Before its collapse, this bridge measured 30 meters in length and 7 meters in height, making it the biggest natural bridge in the Caribbean at the time. For many years, this site was also a frequently visited beach, as the bridge had a small opening through which the water would flow into the tiny beach.

Unfortunately in 2005, the bridge collapsed, and the little beach dried up. Despite this, this site remained a tourist attraction, with many visitors walking along the coral cliffs of the bridge to see the spectacular view of the northern coastline and the Caribbean Sea. Visitors can also still visit the souvenir shop on the left of the bridge entrance.

While the natural bridge no longer is functional, there is now a smaller natural bridge very close. This bridge is often called the "Baby Bridge" or "Daughter Bridge".❑

Alhambra Casino announces special Christmas Points Giveaway!

To spread cheer and excitement, we are thrilled to announce our special Christmas Points Giveaway event: the 1,200,000 Christmas Points Giveaway at the Alhambra Casino.

Every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, we have lots of lucky winners, awarding 100,000 points daily. Each winner will receive 10,000 points on their membership card, for a total of 1.2 million points during the campaign.

How to participate:
Slot players must earn 100 base points. Table gaming players earn 1 point for every 16 table credits. You can play up to 5 times daily, and luck is in your hands.

Join us at Alhambra Casino for a holiday season filled with prizes and excitement.

Remember, 1.2 million points are up for grabs! Don't miss out on this opportunity to win.

While visiting don't miss out our Live Games packed with actions, and our slot machines. Alhambra Casino; where the tourists meet the locals.

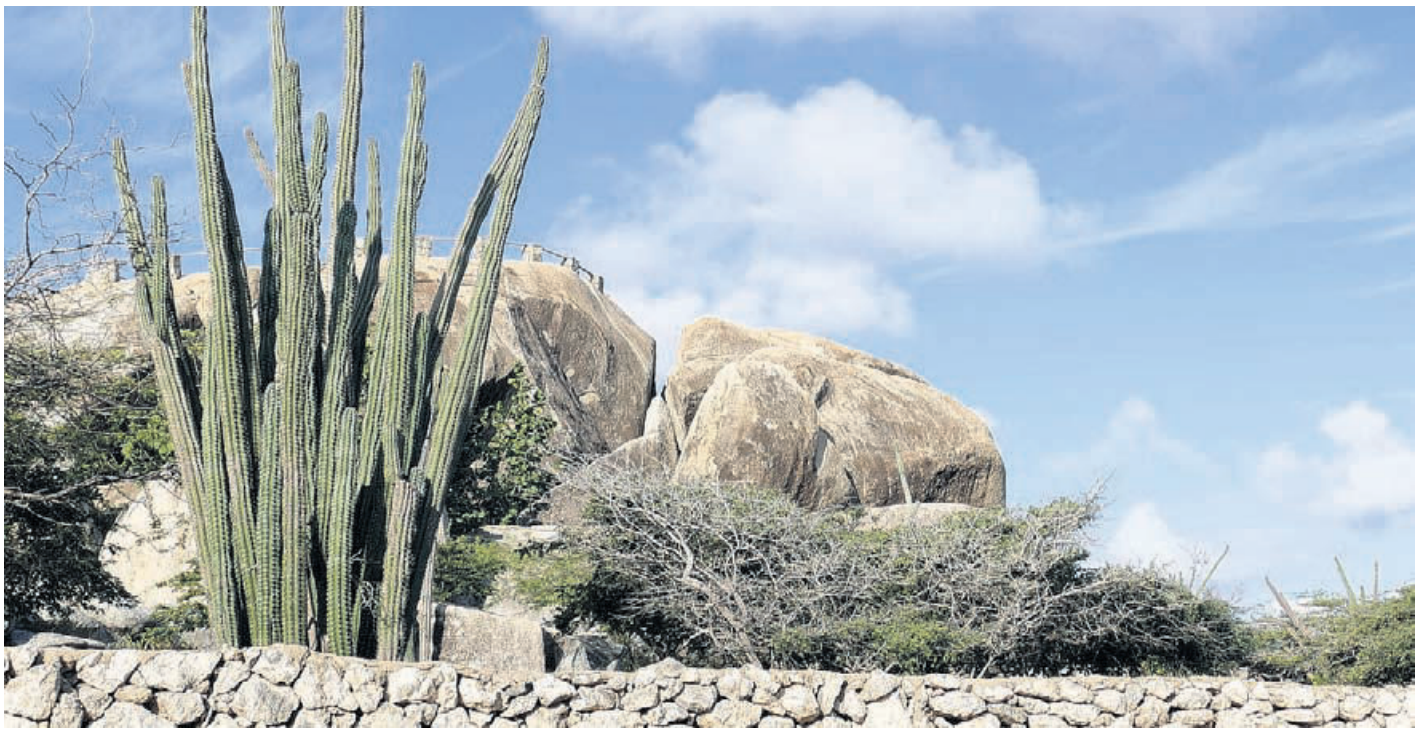
Campaign runs from November 28 through December 21, 2025.

See you there, at the Alhambra Casino where every play is a winner. ❑

ARUBA TODAY

Ayo & Casibari: Aruba's famous rock formations

(Oranjestad)—The Ayo and Casibari Rock Formations are known locally as one of the crucial sites to have in your "off-road" trip itinerary. These naturally formed rock formations as just one of the few places on the island that hold a rich history of our culture and of our ancestors.



Ayo

The Ayo Rock Formation is located in the northern part of the island, right on the road that leads you to the Black Stone Beach, and close to the Natural Bridge. The Ayo is a fenced terrain that consists of several giant boulders, resting neatly on top of or side by side each other, adding gorgeous natural architecture to the surrounding "mondi"*. This is also one of the few sites to contain prehistoric markings of our indigenous ancestors. The Ayo Rock formation contains stairs that lead you to the top of the highest boulder, offering a breath-taking view of the Aruban backyard. The Ayo is usually quiet, as it is situated farther away from the busier parts of the island. However, this is just another charm of the site: the quiet area and the refreshing breeze offer a sense of comfort and peace.

Casibari

Probably the busier rock formation site, the Casibari is situated more in the center of the island, much closer—and more accessible—to the general public. Just like Ayo, Casibari is a fenced area containing several boulders that lay on top or lean on each other. The best aspect of the Casibari Rock Formation is the accompanying view when you climb up the top of the round, flat bolder. For this position, you can see the majority of the island and the ocean in the south.

Both sites are open free to the public, 24 hours a day. However, unless you are taking a trip with a professional tour guide, there are no guides at the sites to help you climb the rock. So, do be careful when trudging on the boulders, and make sure to befriend any roaming goats you see along the way!

*Mondi: what we call our Aruban wilderness. We don't have forests, or deserts, but we do have mondi!❑

Place names in San Nicolas and their origins

(Oranjestad)–If you're ever taking a tour of Aruba, San Nicolas would definitely be on your itinerary. From relaxing on the white, sandy beaches of Baby and Roger's Beach, to exploring the prehistoric caves of Quadirikiri and Fontein, you are taking in a full view of what San Nicolas has to offer. But did you know that you are also passing through areas whose names have historical origins? Here are a few place names in San Nicolas and their origin story.

Sero Colorado

On your way to Baby or Roger's Beach, you'll pass by the famous Red Anchor at what was once the entrance to the Colony residential community and be greeted with red soiled hills by the coast. This is Sero Colorado. Named after the 30-meter, deep red, limestone hill, "Sero Colorado" translates to "Colored Hill". Sero Colorado has deep historical ties with the once-thriving phosphate industry in the area. Matter of fact, there are still underground shafts and passages deep in Sero Colorado from the time of phosphate mining. In 1958, the refinery at the time, Lago, adopted this name for the residential section of its employees.

Vader Piet

Another well visited area, Vader Piet is located in the Arikok National Park. Recognizable sites within this area include the Wind Mills and the Quadirikiri Cave. The origin of this name is part historical and speculation, as there are slight deviations from what actually happened.

In 1829, Pieter Lampe was a planter and the person responsible for governing this remote area. As the story goes, Pieter was well known and beloved for his kindness and good treatment of his employees, and was therefore also called Vader Piet (Father Piet). However, he was tragically murdered—some speculate at the hands of a slave. For his work and good heart, the area was named after him.

San Nicolas

Of course we can't forget San Nicolas itself. Much like Vader Piet, the origin of the name San Nicolas has so far two different accounts. In the literal sense, "San Nicolas" translates to "Saint Nicolas", leading many to believe that this district was named after a Spanish saint. Though one account does support this with the theory that the district was named after the saint by Spanish colonizers, the other account is much less divine, but does refer to an influential figure in the area.

Nicolaas van der Biest was a successful landowner during the time of the phosphate boom in late 19th century Aruba. Back then, landowners (most, if not all of them men) were referred to as "Shon" by their subordinates. So, the district was originally named after Shon Nicolaas. Over time, the name evolved into what is now San Nicolas. ❑

Source: "Aruba: Short History" by Dr. J. Hartog.

Fruit Loose & Veggie Boost

Aruban fruits and vegetables

Fresh fruits make a tropical holiday's picture complete. Whether you see the mango's hanging in the trees or the fresh fruit cocktail on the side table of your pool bed, the link is there: you are in the tropics. Aruba grows her own fruits and veggies and there are some pretty out-of-space local species you may never had heard of, but really healthy and delicious.

Mispel

This is a fruit with a character (5-10 cm/2-4 inches). It does not ripe until it is picked or falls off the tree. Mispel is hard with a sandpaper like texture when immature, soft and juicy when ripe. It's technically a berry, but contains a skin similar to that of a kiwi. It's grainy and sweet, with a light, musky flavor. The sap or gum from the tree is also a source of 'chicle' the original ingredient used to make chewing gum. Rich in tannins, antioxidants shown to contain anti-inflammatory compounds, and vitamin C, essential for healthy immune function. Season: year- round.

Kenepa

Ovoid green fruit that grows in bunches on trees up to 30m high. The fruit is related to the lychee and have tight, thin but rigid skins. Inside the skin is the tart, tangy, or sweet pulp of the fruit covering a large seed. The pulp is usually cream or orange colored. Kenepa strengthens the immune system, and prevents the reproduction of bacteria and viruses in the body. This fruit is highly recommended to treat lung infections and urinary tract infections. It also helps to cure insomnia and rejuvenates the nervous system. Season: the fruit typically ripen during the summer.

Druif

There is no chance you did not bump into one of the sea grape trees while spending your vacation on Aruba. The sea grape plant is often used in ocean-side landscaping in sandy soil right on the beach and it produces clusters of fruit that resemble grapes. Are sea grapes edible? Yes, they are. Animals enjoy sea grapes and humans can eat them as well, and they are used to make jam. They contain very low calories and sugar, enabling good bacterium to digest food and excrete waste quickly which is effective in preventing constipation. Season: Sep-Oct.

Shimarucu

Maybe Aruba's most popular wild fruit tree. You may have noticed cars at the side of the road and people picking those red berries. Well, that's Shimarucu. The local habit to stop for these delicious fruits goes from generation to generation. Its fruit's degree of sour depends on the amount of rain it gets. Red Shimarucus tend to taste better than orange. The fruit has super power: a true vitamin bomb. Adults only need to eat 3-4 of these berries to meet their daily recommended amount of Vitamin C. Season: Rainy months (Oct-Jan).

Tamarind

A delicious, sweet fruit that has a wide variety of uses and applications, both for medicinal and culinary purposes. It is a medium-sized bushy tree with evergreen leaves and fruit that develops in pods characterized by long, brown shells. Inside is a sticky, fleshy, juicy pulp, which is the Tamarind fruit. Both sweet and sour in taste, the fruit contains a significant level of vitamin C, as well as vitamin E, B vitamins, calcium, iron, phosphorous, potassium, manganese, and dietary fiber. There are also a number of organic compounds that make tamarind a powerful antioxidant and anti-inflammatory agent. Season: March.

When it comes to veggies the island certainly offers a home-grown selection. They taste delicious and have their specific talents to boost your immune system.

Concomber chiquito

This is a sort of local squash, but looks like a cucumber with prickly skin. The taste however is bitterer than the cucumber and the vegetable is smaller in size but bigger in width. Inside is a soft, fleshy pulp and seeds, just like the cucumber. Concomber chiquito is grown in the island and used in salads and 'stoba' (stew) or on its own in vinegar. The veggie contains multiple B vitamins, including vitamin B1, vitamin B5, and vitamin B7 (biotin). B vitamins are known to help

ease feelings of anxiety and buffer some of the damaging effects of stress. Additionally this veggie is rich in two of the most basic elements needed for healthy digestion: water and fiber. Season: year- round.

Yambo

Family of Okra, also known as 'lady's fingers': a green flowering plant. Okra belongs to the same plant family as hibiscus and cotton. A classic favorite dish in Aruba is Sopi di yambo. It has long been favored as a food for the health-conscious. It contains potassium, vitamin B, vitamin C, folic acid, and calcium. It's low in calories and has a high dietary fiber content. Recently, a new benefit of including okra in your diet is being considered. Okra has been suggested to help manage blood sugar in cases of type 1, type 2, and gestational diabetes. Season: year-round.

Bonch'i Cunucu

A long, small bean, boiled for a side dish or snack. Long beans have a chewy, crunchy texture–more so than snap beans–and a flavor reminiscent of the dry navy bean or asparagus. Besides stir-fry, soups and salads, the long bean is a good choice for stewing, braising (to remain chewy and firm), sautéing, shallow frying, and deep frying. With cooking, the long bean's bean flavor intensifies. Long beans are low in calories, about 45 calories per cup, and rich in vitamin A and also contain vitamin C and potassium. Season: year-round.

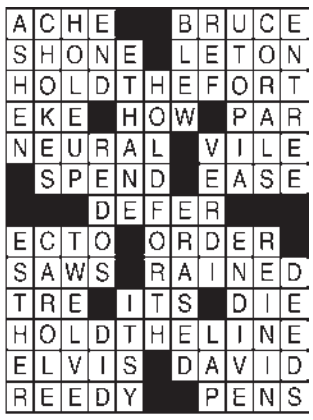
Pampuna

In the endless summer of Caribbean living we only have to concern ourselves with a wet season and a dry season. Still we do indulge heavily in the pleasures of pumpkin and enjoy Caribbean pumpkin recipes year round. A popular dish in Aruba is Sopi di Pompuna, don't miss it. This dish is made of pumpkin soup, and parsley. Pumpkins are rich in flavonoid polyphenolic antioxidants such as xanthin, lutein and carotenes and also contain vitamins. Pumpkin seeds are a good source of omega-3 fatty acids, vitamins, minerals and proteins. Pumpkins are used to make desserts, breads and soups.❑

ARUBA TODAY

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH



ACROSS

1 School course
5 Third-party account
11 Pale tan
12 Horse-related
13 Clothing line
14 Mas-saged
15 Nile serpent
16 "Buenos —"
17 Tribal leader
19 Reservoir maker
22 Stunned states
24 Marry in haste
26 A party to
27 Concept
28 Early computer
30 Wave's top
31 Baseball's Williams
32 Writer Asimov
34 Made a sketch
35 Drama division
38 Ill will
41 Like an eyesore
42 Ancient
43 Shortly
44 Andy Hardy's portrayer
45 Poker payment

DOWN

1 Butte's kin
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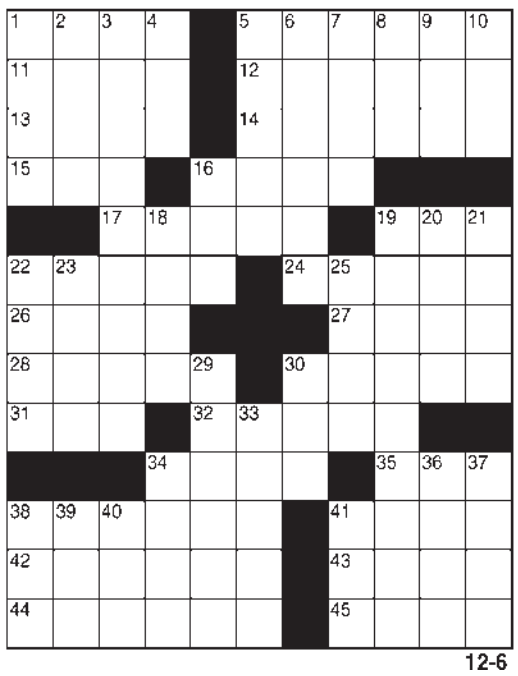
4 Engine sound
5 Spine-tingling
6 Geometric shape
7 Chicago team
8 Vault part
9 Low digit
10 Marry
16 Dentist's deg.
18 Singer Horne
19 Geometric shape
20 Gorillas and gibbons
21 Ham or lamb
22 Losing scheme
23 Writer Rice
25 Old Italian coin
29 Geometric shape
30 Crow call
33 Squalid
34 Singer Celine
36 Artery problem
37 TV's Daly
38 Spoil
39 Before today
40 Summer sign
41 Much of N. Amer.



12-6

A X Y D L B A A X R
is L O N G F E L L O W

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

12-6 CRYPTOQUOTE

F Q G J U J P C D K G B D R R D Z R D

V E V P Q L G R J , O Q U Z F R L D G H D

E V Q J V C G X , G Z C H Q D G J D R G

A U R U V Z E V Q J V K V Q Q V M .

— K D W V C X O D G J J U D

Cryptoquote: FAMILIES ARE LIKE FUDGE — MOSTLY SWEET, WITH A FEW NUTS. — LES DAWSON

Cruise ship Schedule: Nov. 23 - 30 2025

			ARR	DEPT	BERTH	CALLS
SUN	23	MSC DIVINA	08.00	18.00	C	1
		FREEWINDS - Dept.	****	22.30	E	-
TUE	25	WIND SPIRIT	06.00	15.00	B	1
		CARNIVAL HORIZON	09.00	23.00	C	1
WED	26	SERENADE OF THE SEAS	08.00	23.00	C	1
		FREEWINDS	06.00	****	E	1
THU	27	AIDABLU	08.00	18.00	B	
		BRILLIANCE OF THE SEAS	08.00	****	C	1
FRI	28	SILVER SHADOW	08.00	****	B	1
		BRILLIANCE OF THE SEAS - Dept.	****	18.00	C	
SAT	29	*SILVER SHADOW - Dept.*	****	13.00	B	
		SEVEN SEAS SPLENDOR	14.00	23.59	C	1
SUN	30	*FREEWINDS - Dept.*	****	22.30	E	-

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basicbut important information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.

Safety

Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occurs, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.

Supermarket hours

Supermarket hours may vary depending on where you are staying on the island. Generally though, most supermarkets are open from 8am to 8 or 10pm, Monday through Saturday. On Sundays, supermarkets generally close earlier; mostly around 2pm.

Electrical power

Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of outlets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.

SUDOKU

To play sudoku, use logic to fill the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9 only once. Puzzle difficulty increases from Monday to Sunday.

King Classic Sudoku

				9		8		
			6				3	1
6		2		3		5		4
	6	7			1			8
	8	3		4				6
			7	6		4		
			5	8	3	2	1	
	2	5			6		8	
	7				2			

Difficulty: ★★★ 11/27

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Answer to previous puzzle

9	1	4	8	5	7	2	3	6
7	2	5	3	6	1	9	4	8
8	3	6	4	2	9	7	5	1
4	8	7	1	3	6	5	2	9
5	9	1	7	4	2	6	8	3
2	6	3	9	8	5	1	7	4
6	4	2	5	9	8	3	1	7
3	7	9	2	1	4	8	6	5
1	5	8	6	7	3	4	9	2

Difficulty: ★★★ 11/26

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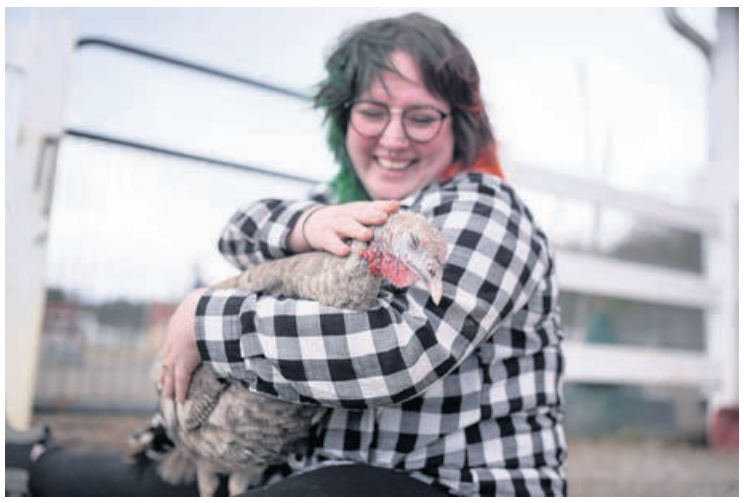
At The Gentle Barn, turkeys are for snuggling, not stuffing at Thanksgiving



Jordan Gullotta pets a turkey during a cuddle therapy session at The Gentle Barn, Tuesday, Nov. 25, 2025, in Christiana, Tenn. Associated Press.

By KRISTIN M. HALL
Associated Press

CHRISTIANA, Tenn. (AP) — At the start of a busy holiday week filled with hours of travel, Jordan Gullotta went to a place that has given her comfort and a sense of peace. At The Gentle Barn, an animal rescue organization in Tennessee that offers animal-based therapy, she can brush a friendly cow or give scratches and kisses to fluffy white sheep.

This time, she cradled a blind turkey in her arms, and after just a few minutes, Smudge, the brown-feathered bird, closed her eyes and dozed in Gullotta's arms.

"Oh, my goodness, you're so snuggly," Gullotta softly whispered.

This time of year, turkeys might be getting all the attention at the dining room table, but The Gentle Barn founder Ellie Laks said the birds can make great cuddle buddies.

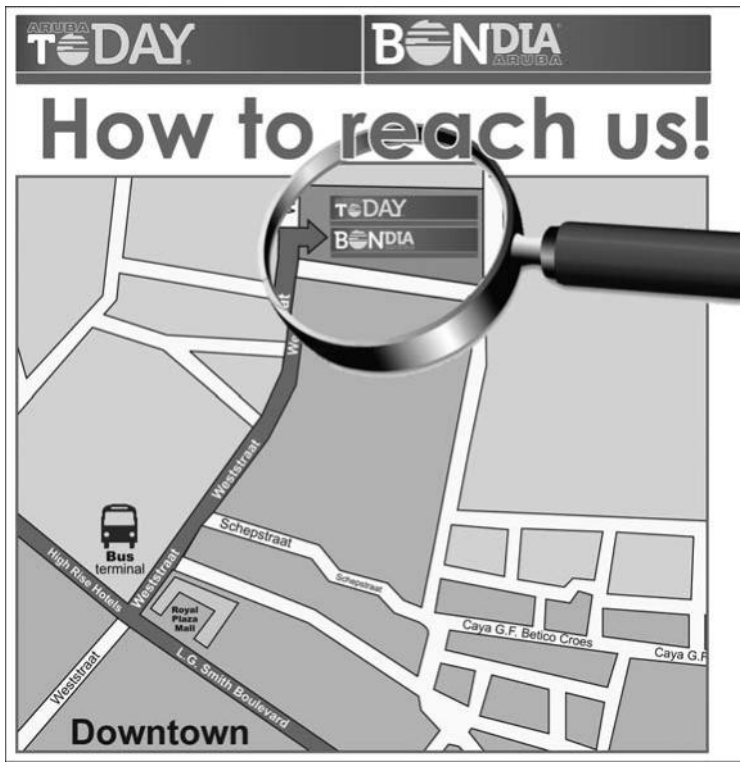
"The world has started to recognize that dogs, cats, horses have a therapeutic value to them," Laks said. "So at The Gentle Barn, we think, 'Why not turkeys?'"

Laks said the idea to include turkeys in therapy sessions with people came to her years ago when a particularly chatty bird was following her around the farm while she was doing chores.

When she sat down at eye level with the big, feathered bird and encouraged the hen to come into her arms, she found that was what the turkey wanted.

The 60 animals at the Tennessee farm have all been rescued from poor living conditions or abuse, and several have injuries or are at an age that require special care. One of the turkeys gets acupuncture for painful hips and trouble walking. One of the goats lost its back hooves to hypothermia and moves around in a custom wheelchair.

"We rehabilitate them, give them sanctuary, and then when they're ready, we partner with them to heal people with the same stories of trauma and connect people to the love and magic of animals," Laks said.❑



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San Nicolas
Imsan 24 hours
Tel.524 8833

PHARMACY ON DUTY

Oranjestad:
del Pueblo: Tel.582 1253
San Nicolas:
Aloe: Tel.584 4606

OTHER

Dental Clinic 587 9850
Blood Bank Aruba 587 0002
Urgent Care 586 0448
Walk-In Doctor's Clinic
+297 588 0539

EMERGENCY

Police	**100**
Oranjestad	**527 3140**
Noord	**527 3200**
Sta. Cruz	**527 2900**
San Nicolas	**584 5000**
Police Tipline	**11141**
Ambulancia	**911**
Fire Dept.	**115**
Red Cross	**582 2219**

TAXI SERVICES

Taxi Tas	**587 5900**
Prof. Taxi	**588 0035**
Taxi D.T.S.	**587 2300**
Taxi Serv. Aruba	**583 3232**
A1 Taxi Serv.	**280 2828**

TRAVEL INFO

Aruba Airport	**524 2424**
American Airlines	**582 2700**
Avianca	**588 0059**
Jet Blue	**588 2244**
Surinam	**582 7896**

AID FOUNDATIONS

Aruba Food Bank
Tel. 588 0002

FAVI- Visually Impaired
Tel. 582 5051

Alcoholics Anonymous
Tel. 736 2952

Narcotics Anonymous
Tel. 583 8989

Fundacion Contra Violencia Relacional Tel. 583 5400

Centre for Diabetes
Tel. 524 8888

Child Abuse Prevention
Tel. 582 4433

Quota Club Tel. 525 2672

General Info

Phone Directory Tel. 118

ARUBA TODAY

Australia opens 2026 rugby season against Ireland and France ahead of hosting 2027 World Cup

Associated Press

SYDNEY (AP) — Coming off their first winless tour of Europe since 1958 and losers of 10 of their 15 matches this year, things won't get any easier for the Wallabies to start the 2026 season.

Rugby Australia said Wednesday that the Wallabies would open their 14-test 2026 season with matches against Six Nations heavyweight and fourth-ranked Ireland, followed by fifth-ranked France the following week.

A year ahead of Australia hosting the 2027 World Cup, the Wallabies' schedule next year also includes the new Nations Championship along with home tests against South Africa, New Zealand and Japan.

Australia's Filipo Daugunu, left, is challenged by France's Louis Bielle-Biarrey during the rugby union Nations Series match between France and Australia in Saint-Denis, outside Paris, Saturday, Nov. 22, 2025.

Associated Press.

Australia is set to open its season against Ireland in Sydney on July 4, then face France a week later in Brisbane. Current head coach Joe Schmidt's final game in charge will come against Italy on July 18 at a venue to be confirmed.

New coach Les Kiss will take over with a home-and-away series against Japan Aug. 8 in Japan and the following week in Townsville in north Queensland state.

Then the Wallabies will head to Argentina for a two-test series against the Pumas on Aug. 29 and Sept. 5.

Australia will host South Africa on Sept. 27 before the Bledisloe Cup series, with Sydney hosting the second test against New Zealand on Oct. 17.

The Wallabies' late-season tour to Europe will consist of matches against England, Scotland and Wales on consecutive weekends in November, with the Nations Championship finals weekend ending the year.

"These matches will be critical as the Wallabies finalize their preparation for a truly remarkable 2027 campaign, which will culminate in the first Rugby World Cup in Australia in 24 years," said Rugby Australia chief executive Phil Waugh.❑

Cortina preparing to host heads of state during the Winter Olympics. Mayor won't say which ones

By COLLEEN BARRY and ANDREW DAMPF
Associated Press

ROME (AP) — The draw of the luxury mountain resort of Cortina d'Ampezzo ringed by jagged peaks of the Dolomites is proving irresistible to heads of state, who are planning to visit the Alpine venue during the Milan Cortina Winter Olympics, the town's mayor told The Associated Press on Tuesday.

Mayor Gianluca Lorenzi quipped that so much interest had grown around Cortina that the Games are shaping up to be "Cortina Milan instead of Milan Cortina."

Lorenzi declined to name which officials planned to spend at least some of the Feb. 6-22 Games in the town that will host curling, sliding and women's Alpine skiing.

But he said that officials were working on plans to secure their stays including a helipad to make arrival from other venues easier.

A snow cannon in action on the Olympia delle Tofane course where the women's Alpine skiing will be contested at the 2026 Milan Cortina Winter Olympics, in Cortina D'Ampezzo, Italy, Friday, Nov. 21, 2025.

Associated Press.

The Milan Cortina games are spread throughout northern Italy and the traveling distance between the two host cities by road runs some five hours, if not more. Top government officials, including heads of state, as well as members of royal families typically attend the opening ceremony, which will be held in Milan on Feb. 6, and often stay on to attend events.

"Most people thought these figures would go to Milan, instead a lot of interest has been generated over the last year and a half to come to Cortina,'' Lorenzi said.

"Cortina is dominating the news about the Olympics to the point that it's nearly become Cortina Milan instead of Milan Cortina."

While the main opening ceremony is slated for the San Siro soccer stadium in Milan, Cortina will also host a smaller ceremony at the same time that will feature an athletes' parade and the lighting of a cauldron.

Women's Alpine skiing in Cortina is one of the games' biggest draws, with American athletes like Lindsey Vonn and Mikaela Shiffrin and host Italy's Sofia Goggia slated to compete.

Cortina will also host curling and the sliding events: bobsled, luge and skeleton.

The Italian government is rushing to complete the rebuilding of Cortina's century-old sliding center at a cost of 118 million euros ($136 million) after the International Olympic Committee had suggested holding the events on a track in nearby Austria or Switzerland instead.

Curling is especially dear to Lorenzi, who competed on the Italian national curling team in three European championships, in 1997, 1999 and 2000. But the mayor is not sure that his official duties will allow him the luxury of attending all the curling events as he would have liked.

"We'll have a lot of VIPs here both heads of state and royalty. So there will be official meetings which could lead to international partnerships for Cortina," he said.

These are the second Winter Games for Cortina, which hosted in 1956. Since then, Cortina has developed into a major tourist draw in particular for skiing and other Alpine sports in the winter; and hiking, climbing and biking in the summer months.

Lorenzi said the Olympics have already provided an ideal opportunity for Cortina to relaunch as a destination for international tourists, as it seeks investments and identifies twin cities to spread its charms. International visitation has started to pick up in recent years, as word of the Games spread, the mayor said."❑

Ukrainian sumo wrestler Aonishiki nears the pinnacle of Japan's national sport

By STEPHEN WADE
AP Sports Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Ukrainian sumo wrestler Aonishiki is only 21 but has moved just one step from the top rank of Japan's national sport.

In an elaborate ceremony on Wednesday, he was promoted by the Japan Sumo Association to the rank of ozeki, the rung just below the top.

Only two now hold the top rank of yokozuna grand champion in English: Japanese Onosato and Mongolia-born Hoshoryu.

Ukrainian sumo wrestler Aonishiki, center, is celebrated by kindergarteners his promotion to the rank of ozeki in Kurume, Fukuoka prefecture, southern Japan Wednesday, Nov. 26, 2025.
Associated Press.

"I'm happy but I feel more strongly about working harder from now on," Aonishiki said Wednesday after the ceremony. "There is a higher rank, and that's my next goal."

Sumo's new rising star, who wrestles under the ring name of Aonishiki Arata, was born Danilo Yavhushyshyn in west central Ukraine and has identified his hometown as Vinnytsia.

He moved to Japan after Russia invaded Ukraine just over 3 1/2 years ago, the byproduct of a friendship he had made a few years earlier with a Japanese wrestler at a tournament.

Japanese media identifies him as being the quickest he's wrestled only 14 tournaments to reach the ozeki rank since 1958 when the present tournament scheduling system was installed.

The promotion was inevitable after he won a prestigious tournament on Sunday in western Japan. He defeated Hoshoryu in the deciding match.

He explained earlier that his parents fled to Germany after the invasion and said they are living safely. He said he called them after the big tournament on Sunday and praised them for allowing him to pursue his interests. He said his mother cried on the phone call. He was told his father did too, but tried to hide it.

"They never scolded me even when I didn't do well in studies, as they believed in letting me do what I liked to do," he said Wednesday.

Aonishiki is small by sumo standards. He weighs in the 125 to 135 kilogram range (between 275 to 300 pounds). This is slight in sumo in the range of an NFL lineman since many wrestlers weigh at least 150-kilograms (330 pounds) and some much more.

Sumo experts in Japan say his success comes from keeping a low body position. He can bench press 210 kilograms (460 pounds) about 50% more than his body weight.

"I need to be stronger all around," he said Wednesday. "I have to be bigger, and I still need to learn a lot more about sumo."❑

Red Sox acquire right-hander Sonny Gray from the Cardinals

By JIMMY GOLEN
AP Sports Writer

BOSTON (AP) — The Boston Red Sox added 36-year-old right-hander Sonny Gray to their rotation on Tuesday, filling one of their biggest needs by acquiring the three-time All-Star from the St. Louis Cardinals with more than two months left in the offseason.

The Cardinals will eat $20 million of Gray's salary and receive righty Richard Fitts and a prospect in the deal. Gray gives Boston a dependable option who could take some of the pressure off the rest of the rotation behind ace Garrett Crochet. "We've been pretty transparent about our desire to add to the rotation, and our desire to add a bat," Red Sox Chief Baseball Officer Craig Breslow told reporters on a conference call. "I don't think anybody wants to feel like they're in a position of having to check off multiple items on the shopping list and feel like you're either running out of time or running out of options. ... But certainly we feel good about where we sit today."

Gray went 14-8 with a 4.28 ERA for the Cardinals last season, striking out 201 batters and walking 38 in 32 starts the best ratio in the NL. He is one of five pitchers to record at least 200 strikeouts in each of the last two seasons.

"When you think about what Sonny has been in this league, it's a guy who's pitched at the front of rotations," Breslow said. "Those things that we think pitchers carry from year to year are things like strikeout rates and walk rates and ability to just stay off barrels. He excels there."

In a 13-year career with five teams, Gray is 125-102 with a 3.58 ERA. Asked if Gray was the No. 2 starter the Red Sox were seeking, Breslow said, "I don't know how much sense it makes in November to put a number on a guy."

"Sonny is a very talented major league pitcher. The seasons that he's put up pretty consistently indicate that to be the case," he said. "That said, we still intend to improve our team. Exactly what that looks like, we don't know right now."

Fitts, who turns 26 next month, was 2-4 with a 5.00 ERA as a rookie in Boston last season. The Cardinals also get 22-year-old lefty Brandon Clarke, a fifth-round draft pick who has pitched only in Class A and is rated the No. 5 prospect in the Red Sox system by MLB.com, and a player to be named or cash.

St. Louis Cardinals' Sonny Gray pitches to a San Francisco Giants batter during the first inning of a baseball game, Sept. 24, 2025, in San Francisco.
Associated Press.

"Richard Fitts has already begun his big league career, and with his power stuff and willingness to attack the strike zone, he has the ability to start games at the highest level for many years. Brandon Clarke is an exciting left-handed prospect whose ceiling rivals that of any pitcher in the minor leagues," said Cardinals President of Baseball Operations Chaim Bloom, who previously held that job with the Red Sox. "Both have the potential to be part of our growing core for a long time."❑

Doncic criticizes the NBA Cup court, but praises Lakers for support in late-game skirmish with Dunn

By GREG BEACHAM
AP Sports Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Luka Doncic was not pleased by the special NBA Cup court at the Los Angeles Lakers' downtown arena, calling it "slippery" and "dangerous."

The Slovenian superstar was much happier about the Lakers' togetherness and toughness after Jaxson Hayes stuck up for him in his latest confrontation with nemesis Kris Dunn and he plans to pay Hayes' fine for the resulting technical foul.

Doncic had 43 points, 13 assists and nine rebounds during a 135-118 victory over the Los Angeles Clippers on Tuesday night, just barely missing his 10th career 40-point triple-double. He did it all on the Lakers' yellow version of the exotic hardwood courts deployed across the league to distinguish the NBA Cup games but Doncic didn't feel safe out there.

Los Angeles Clippers guard Kris Dunn (8) is pushed by Los Angeles Lakers center Jaxson Hayes (11) after Dunn shoved the ball into Luka Doncic's chest during the second half of an NBA Cup basketball game Tuesday, Nov. 25, 2025, in Los Angeles.

Associated Press.

"Adjust the courts, please," Doncic said after praising the format of the tournament, now in its third year. "It's just slippery. It's dangerous. ... I slipped a lot of times. You could see a lot of players slipped. That's dangerous, man."

The game was the Lakers' first Cup game at home after starting group play with two road games. Doncic said he couldn't remember whether the courts in New Orleans and Memphis were more slippery than normal.

"I think they're just new courts, so it's kind of tough," Doncic said. "It needs ... playing some games."

Complaints about the special courts are not new. Boston star Jaylen Brown said he injured his groin while playing on the Toronto Raptors' NBA Cup court in 2023, and other players have weighed in on the dangers of playing on unworn hardwood.

LeBron James said he saw "a couple of guys" struggling on the court Tuesday, but didn't personally find it dangerous.

The Lakers' fifth consecutive victory got a bit heated late in the fourth quarter when Dunn knocked Doncic to the court with a check to the back. Doncic got up and confronted Dunn, who shoved the ball into his chest.

Hayes responded with a two-handed shove of Dunn, who attempted to retaliate with a swat at Hayes' head while officials and teammates separated them.

Hayes will get a fine for his T, but it won't cost him any money.

"I got him," Doncic said. "I told him right away, thanks for having my back. This is what I love about this team.

Everybody has got each other's back."❑